

# CALL TO ACTION

## VIPs: *Volunteers in Parks*



# REVOLUTIONS

A PUBLICATION ON THE JOHN H. CHAFEE BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR





### National Park Service Ranger Suzanne Buchanan Coordinator, Volunteers in Parks Program

“Thirty years ago I would never have thought that I would be coordinating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ZAP!” Suzanne Buchanan exclaimed one recent morning. In fact, Suzanne has found that she has, indeed, come full circle with the Blackstone River and with ZAP! As a junior high school student she pitched in to help clean the Blackstone River during the 1972 *Journal/Bulletin* sponsored initiative. On the cusp of the nascent environmental movement and championed by individuals who were outraged at how abused and neglected the Blackstone River had become, the event was able to draw an estimated 10,000 to the clean-up. Among those was the impressionable Suzanne. Now she is coordinating the event’s thirtieth anniversary to celebrate how much the river has changed for the better through the efforts of an incredible host of dedicated people. She is just one enthusiastic example of how volunteering can direct your life.



## The National Heritage Corridor + Volunteers = Success!

The Volunteers-in-Parks (VIP) Program is a National Park Service program that was created in 1970. It enables the Park Service to effectively integrate volunteers into park programming varying from management and preservation to interpretation and public education. The Volunteers-in-Parks Program aims to create a mutually rewarding experience for the volunteer and for the needs of the Park Service. Each year, more than 120,000 volunteers give over 4,000,000 hours of service to America’s treasures throughout the National Park system.

The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor was established in 1986 to preserve and protect the historic and cultural attributes of the birthplace of “America’s Industrial Revolution.” Our growing Volunteers-in-Parks program has a dual purpose: It allows the heritage sites of the Blackstone Valley to expand their interpretive programs, and it offers people who live in the Blackstone Valley - actually in the National Park - an opportunity to communicate with visitors and to give of themselves. The result - an enriched experience for the visitor and the volunteer.

In 2002, VIP program volunteers in the Blackstone Corridor contributed nearly 20,000 hours to the sites, programs and special events that make the “Birthplace of the Industrial Revolution” one of America’s unique tourism experiences.



Top: Padd below, this Left: Badg the Boy Sc Right: Vol beaver dam

### From Scouts to Seniors, VIPs Make it Happen

What do Corridor volunteers have in common? Love for the Blackstone Valley, civic pride, dedication and joy in contributing to make things happen in a positive and rewarding way. A new program gives Boy and Girl Scouts of America the opportunity to earn a volunteer patch, an existing partnership teams up companies and organizations for classroom sponsorship and senior citizens can be found at the core of many volunteer projects. Look around you and you will see that there is no age limit or special experience that defines a Blackstone Valley VIP, but if you look in the mirror you could see another VIP – you!



*Paddle Club Team Leaders*

### On the cover:

*Riverfest race in the rain: The twin spires of Saint Ann’s church overlooks the Blackstone River in Woonsocket*







*le Club river clean up; is only one of the trash piles. es for partnerhsip programs with outs and Girl Scouts of America. unteer nature walk, highlighting s on the Blackstone River.*



## SITES

### River Bend Farm

One of the longest running VIP programs can be found at River Bend Farm on Oak Street in Uxbridge. Managed by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, the Visitor Center has benefited greatly from the generosity of two gentlemen who have each volunteered a day a week to supplement the staffing at the Visitors Center – for 8 years of continuous service. Julie Riendeau of Uxbridge is a VIP who has recruited her entire family into the program. Conveying the wonders of nature to young people is especially gratifying. “Seeing kids’ eyes light up when they learn or try something new is just wonderful” she said. “I can make things interesting to them because it’s right here in the National Heritage Corridor. And I am giving something back to my community.”

### Kelly House

A parallel relationship with the VIP program has been created recently with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management at the Blackstone Canal State Park in Lincoln. In partnership with the RI Department of Transportation, the Kelly House is now a Transportation Museum that highlights the evolution of transportation beginning with the Blackstone Canal that runs behind it. “Helping to staff the museum is a terrific volunteer opportunity,” volunteer coordinator Suzanne Buchanan explained. “We expect a lot of traffic since the Kelly House sits at the intersection of the Blackstone River, Canal and Bikeway.”



*Very much in need of a visual presence at events throughout the river valley, Coordinator Buchanan obtained a used cart that needed some retrofitting and restoration. Students from Woonsocket Career and Technology program then volunteered to transform the cart into a moveable VIP communications center for events and festivals. Look for the cart and Volunteer staff at many festivals and events.*



*New for 2003: fly tying classes*



*Snowshoeing at River Bend Farm*

## PROGRAMS

Here is an opportunity to be on the water and to volunteer, too. The Tuesday Night Paddle Club’s popularity almost contributed to its early demise. Faced with nearly 80 participants, National Park Rangers and Club organizers had to find a better, safer way to accommodate all those who wanted to participate. One solution was to offer the Paddle Club meetings twice a week. Another solution was to partner with the Volunteers in Parks. Working together, team leaders were identified who were able to supplement staffing and coordination of the program to “keep it afloat.” Paddle Club volunteers gave 812 volunteers hours over a 16 week period. According to Ranger Buchanan, they showed up even when they were not scheduled to volunteer. She is confident that they, and the Paddle Club, will be around for quite some time.

## EVENTS

The members of Rhode Island’s “Friends of the Blackstone” sponsor a veritable smorgasbord of events that celebrate the Blackstone River throughout the year. From Riverfest and its canoe race each spring to ZAP! The Blackstone clean-ups to the inception of a Fly Tying/Fishing Club, the Friends of the Blackstone (FOB) has become a terrific example of how partnering with other organizations can maximize the power and connections brought to the river. Additional assistance is given by willing volunteers from throughout the watershed to help ensure that all of FOB’s events are successful.

Leon Kowal is with Friends of the Blackstone (FOB) and is one of the coordinators of the annual Riverfest canoe and kayak race. He calls VIP Keith Hainley the “king of clean-ups” in the lower Blackstone. By all accounts, Hainley, a national accounts representative by day, has logged hundreds of volunteer hours in and along the Blackstone River. Hainley readily admits that he not only loves being on the river, but he also enjoys the benefits of the VIP program. “I’m alerted to things I might miss through the VIP newsletter and I meet people who like doing the same things I do at the meetings,” he said. “The encouragement and support I’ve gotten from participating in the Volunteers-in-Parks program has changed my life.”



*Riverfest Canoe Race held annually*





Volunteers visit area schools with "A New Coat for Anna" story hour and coat collection



Right: How Sweet It Is! Maple Sugaring at River Bend Farm. Below: fly tying classes



### Benefits to Volunteers

Volunteers-in-Parks program volunteers play a vital role in the ability of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor to meet and inform visitors as well as event and program participants at the Valley's numerous heritage sites, museums and parks. In recognition of their efforts, National Park Service VIP uniforms, hats and name plates are provided. Volunteers are required to attend an orientation meeting and are encouraged to attend bi-monthly meetings held at different sites where they are often given a behind-the-scenes look at what makes that particular site effective and special. Volunteer Susan Shea coordinates the monthly VIP newsletter that contains volunteer news and opportunities. If training will make you a better volunteer, VIP coordinator Suzanne Buchanan is prepared to assist you to ensure that you get the information you need.

### Benefits to Heritage Sites

"So many of our heritage sites and programs can benefit from volunteers," Coordinator Buchanan explained. "If there is a large event coming up, we can coordinate our volunteers to assist with it. Volunteers get to know other volunteers, the work is shared and everyone has a great experience. That's what this program is all about," she added. Volunteers-in-Parks also lend continuity to the National Heritage Corridor experience. Visitors seeing VIP uniforms know they can rely on solid information and assistance from that volunteer. Finding the VIP uniforms throughout the Corridor adds to their heritage tourism experience. If you would like your site or event to develop a relationship with the VIP program, call Coordinator Suzanne Buchanan at the number listed.



### VIP Student Sponsorship

The Volunteers-in-Parks program is working to encourage the development of more student programs like the ones at the Woonsocket Career & Technology School. If your company or organization would like to sponsor a classroom or school project, contact Suzanne Buchanan. An annual donation of \$350 will supply participating students with Volunteers-in-Parks t-shirts and caps and other necessary supplies. Your sponsorship will also be acknowledged throughout the following year in the VIP monthly newsletter.

### New Program Makes Scouts VIPs, too!

The National Park Service is partnering to promote a new program called "Service to America" that joins the Boy and Girl Scouts of America with the Volunteers-in-Parks program. Scouts volunteering a minimum of 12 hours to a National Park can receive a "Service to America" badge that acknowledges their contribution to America's parks. "Our Scouts live in our National Park," Buchanan stated. "We are looking forward to a terrific response from the scouts who live and go to school right here in the Blackstone River Valley!"

*There is a wide array of activities and programs available to those interested in volunteering with the Volunteers-in-Parks Program. Here are some examples of events, heritage sites, and programs that could use your expertise. Won't you join them?*

## CALL TO ACTION

Friends of the Blackstone, **Riverfest**, each May, RI **Greenway Challenge**, Corridor Coalition • **Slater Mill** Historic Site, Pawtucket, RI • **River Bend Farm** Visitors Center, Uxbridge, MA • **The Museum of Work & Culture**, Woonsocket, RI • **Events** including the annual **Polar Express** Train Ride, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, RI • **Interpretive Programs** at Historic Sites • Woonsocket High School River Club / Student Volunteer Program • **A New Coat for Anna** Story Hour and Coat Collection program • **Passport to History** throughout the Blackstone River Valley • **Special events** for the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor • **Trail Maintenance** • Water Quality Monitoring • **Walking Tours** • Wild Plant Walking Tours • Blackstone Rescue & Dive Team • **Canoe/Kayak Trips** on the Blackstone River • Cross-Country Ski Tours • **Fly Fishing Club** • Paddle Club outings • **Office/Administrative Assistance** at the National Heritage Corridor, RI • Resource Management Projects • **ZAP! The Blackstone projects**

### To join the Volunteers-in-Parks Program,

Call Coordinator Suzanne Buchanan at the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor office at 401-762-0440, e-mail her: Suzanne\_Buchanan@nps.gov, or fill out this form and mail it to:

John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley  
National Heritage Corridor  
One Depot Square, Woonsocket, RI 02895

FAX: 401-762-0530

Visit on the web at [www.nps.gov/blac/home.htm](http://www.nps.gov/blac/home.htm)



- ☐ I am interested in volunteering
- ☐ My heritage site/organization needs VIPs
- ☐ My company is interested in sponsoring a classroom
- ☐ I would like to start a VIP classroom program
- ☐ Send me information about your Service to America program for Scouts.
- ☐ Send me your newsletter so I can learn more!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Best way to contact me is: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

day (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ eve. (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

